

my hand belongs in yours by papenathy

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Summary:

Will couldn't remember how long Mike had left his hand on top of his own; it could've been hours, because that was what it felt like. Will was surely taken by surprise when Mike leaned across and put his hand on his, perhaps he was in too much of a state to freak out over the feeling of their skin touching, so he relaxed. At Mike's touch, he stopped shaking, he breathed out slowly... and everything seemed like it could be okay.

Again, I'm filling in the gaps and calling what I come up with canon. What I imagine would've, and should've, happened between the hand hold scene and when Mike wakes up on Will's floor in the morning.

my hand belongs in yours

Will couldn't remember how long Mike had left his hand on top of his own; it could've been hours, because that was what it felt like. Will was surely taken by surprise when Mike leaned across and put his hand on his, perhaps he was in too much of a state to freak out over the feeling of their skin touching, so he relaxed. At Mike's touch, he stopped shaking, he breathed out slowly... and everything seemed like it could be okay.

Although it felt like hours, Will wished he could have had longer. He wanted to stay there forever with Mike and never let go. He was able to keep Will in the real world, so he felt like he had to hold onto Mike incase he started to drift away again. Will was too warm, he needed to be colder, he wanted nothing more than to lay in a bath of ice with the windows wide open in the middle of winter, so the fact that Mike still managed to make him blush didn't help.

It was like a choice, Will could either stay in the real world with Mike keeping him grounded or, he could be cold like he so desperately wanted to be. But that would mean letting the shadow monster get into him. The first sounded like the better option, but Will realised it meant he would have to suffer, and he was willing to suffer if it meant he could stay with Mike.

After Mike told Will that they wouldn't let the shadow monster spy back, Will truly believed him. He had some hope that everything would turn out okay, and with everyone by his side, especially Mike, they'd be able to get through this mess. Will felt Mike's thumb run over the back of his hand and he tried not to shiver, although that was what part of him wanted. Even though Will was avoiding his eyes, he knew Mike was smiling at him softly, and he then placed his other hand on Will's back and rubbed it comfortingly.

Suddenly everything felt right.

"I can stay, if you want." Mike offered, and Will looked at him for a moment. He had tears welling up in his eyes and the fact that Mike was willing to stay by his side through all of this made them want to spill. "Do you want me to?"

Will didn't say anything for a few moments, it wasn't that he felt bad for saying that he wanted Mike to stay with him, he just hated that he had to see him like this. He hated feeling like a burden on everyone. He thought that Mike deserved better than his problems all the time, there were so many panic attacks over the past year and Mike was always there. He seemed like the only one who could truly get through to Will sometimes. Will felt as if he could never repay Mike in any way to thank him for all he had done.

Will sniffled and let some tears fall, suddenly he felt like he had stopped spacing out and all of his emotions had hit him. When he spoke about the shadow monster he'd just feel empty and disconnected from everything in some sort of way, but now that he was thinking of Mike more; everything seemed to shift and Will felt different.

Mike noticed Will's sudden change and rubbed his back a little more, causing Will to sway a little bit. "Hey, come on." Mike's voice was still as soft as it was before. He pulled Will into his side and Will let himself just lean there whilst he cried a little more. Mike's hand was still on top of his, so he decided to link them properly. He put his hand under Will's and their fingers slotted in between each other, and then Mike gave Will's hand a reassuring squeeze. He placed his chin on top of Will's head and continued to rub small circles on his back.

He knew it was important for Will to let out any kind of emotion that he had, so he let him do it. He knew Will would do the same for him, well, he already had. They'd done this many times in the past for each other, and it always seemed to make them feel better.

"I'm sorry." Will sniffled after a few moments.

Mike really hated how Will always felt the need to apologise for things that he shouldn't need to be sorry for. "You have nothing to apologise for, okay?" Mike said after taking his chin off the top of Will's head, and attempting to look at his face.

Will would've protested, but he had no energy to. He nodded his head and then sighed when the tears came to a gradual stop. He felt like he was so weak, and he hated Mike seeing him this way. Will

wished he could pull himself together sometimes.

“I wish I wasn’t so weak, you know?” Will shrugged, and Mike held onto his hand tighter if that was even possible.

“Will, seriously?” Mike started, and Will frowned to himself. “If being weak means you can survive in an alternate dimension for days whilst being hunted by an interdimensional monster then jesus, I want to be weak too.”

Will smiled to himself and then laughed slightly, and he realised that Mike may have been right. “I guess.”

“You’re the strongest person I know. You always have been and you always will.” Mike told him, and Will was amazed at how little things like these could make such a difference. Especially when they came from Mike. He could feel so full and complete when Mike was there for him.

You’re the strongest person I know .

They stayed there for a few moments, Will enjoying the feeling of being so close to Mike. He really just needed someone to hold him, and Mike was perfect for that. Will always thought they fit together like two puzzle pieces. Mike enjoyed it just as much, he felt good when he could make others feel better, especially when it was Will. Then again, even though Mike felt happy when he could cheer Dustin or Lucas up; it would never compare to the feeling he got when he could make Will happy. He didn’t really like to think of why that was.

Mike broke their comfortable silence after a few minutes. “Do you want me to stay with you, then?”

Will realised it would probably be best if he did, because if anything did happen, Mike could get through to him like no one else could. He nodded his head slowly. “Can you?”

“Yeah, of course.” Mike smiled sadly and Will breathed out a sigh of relief. Mike would always stay with Will if it was what he wanted, he cared for him that much. Will always found himself imagining what

his life would be like without Mike by his side. Even for stupid small things before everything bad happened. If Will got upset after being called a name, or if he just didn't feel good one day, that time he broke his finger, literally anything... Mike would be there.

Mike hugged Will one more time before standing up from the bed, and Will assumed he was going to set the sleeping bag up on the floor. Will had to admit, he felt so cold when Mike had left him, and even though he didn't want to be warm; Mike's kind of warmth was different. It didn't hurt Will at all, it made him feel okay.

Mike had stayed over on Will's floor so many times before, he didn't mind it. Although Will wished he would just lay next to him sometimes and hold him. The amount of times the question had almost slipped out was ridiculous, and this time Will felt as though he might have a good enough excuse to ask.

Will just watched as Mike got the sleeping bag, some pillows and a couple of blankets out of the top of Will's closet. It was like they were reserved for him in a way, seeing as though he literally stayed there all the time. Sure, the party would have group sleepovers, but Dustin and Lucas would bring their own stuff; and they didn't know that Mike had his designated stuff there. He even had a spare toothbrush.

The times Mike would stay would often be random, he'd show up sometimes and Will would just let him stay. It wasn't like Joyce minded either, she always treated him like a son of her own. Will knew that Mike sometimes liked to get away from his own family, so he liked being the person Mike could turn to.

Some nights, when Will couldn't sleep, he'd take one of Mike's blankets out of his closet and bury himself in it. He always found himself comforted by it, sometimes he thought it might be weird but it truly did help him. He'd never tell Mike that though, he'd be way too embarrassed.

When Mike had sorted everything out, Will had moved to the top of his bed and he was sat holding his knees to his chest. He smiled up at Mike, as if inviting him to sit down. He did exactly that after removing his shoes. He sat cross legged facing Will, and he noticed that he had become more relaxed. He was sweating less, his eyes

weren't welled up and he seemed to be breathing at an ordinary pace. Mike wasn't aware how much his presence helped his best friend.

"Did I miss much at school today?" Will started, he always hated missing school because he actually really liked it. The learning part anyway, and spending time with his friends. He hated the days when people would chose to pick on him.

"Not much." Mike shrugged. "We looked in the trash for Dart, which was disgusting but... no luck. Then I tried to call you to see what was going on, and when there was no answer I decided I had to tell Dustin and Lucas about Halloween night."

"Oh," Will nodded, remembering that he told Mike not to tell them what had happened. "Right."

Mike suddenly felt guilty. "Sorry, Will. I didn't tell them everything just... that you saw something, you know? Something like Dart." He explained. "Then I told them I was coming here to check on you because I was worried and I told them to keep trying to find Dart."

I was worried .

"You were worried?" Will couldn't help but ask. Of course Mike would worry about him if they were best friends, but it still made his stomach feel weird.

Mike pulled one of his knees to his chest. "Of course I was. I always hate it when you're not sat next to me in class, it's weird."

Will tried keep the smile off his face. They'd always sit next to each other in the classes that they had together, they'd always try to get there earlier on the first day so they could get decent seats by each other. It was just what they did, always.

"Really?"

"Obviously." Mike playfully rolled his eyes, but then he seemed to get serious. "I missed you, that week without you was just... it was all kinds of weird and I hated it."

I missed you .

“Clearly that week was weirder for you but, what I’m trying to say is... things aren’t the same without you around.” Mike explained, and Will felt like he could suddenly walk on water. All these things Mike was saying were exactly what he needed. He needed to feel like he was valued and wanted, and Mike did exactly that.

Will just let himself smile at this point. “Well, I missed you too.”

“I’d be offended if you didn’t, Byers.” Mike laughed lightly, and Will couldn’t help but laugh too.

Something was different that night, and Will thought it was probably because Mike had decided to hold his hand not long before. It wasn’t anything new, they’d held hands to comfort each other many times before, but now it was just different. Will could still feel the memory of Mike’s hand in his own and he just wanted to grab it again, but he couldn’t. There was something different lingering in the air that night that neither of them could explain.

Conversation came easily then, as it always did. They discussed random things, like memories they shared and stupid funny stories. Mike told Will about all the ideas he was getting for a comic book he wanted to write one day, and Will said he could draw it for Mike if he wanted him to. It wouldn’t be a problem, Will would draw things for Mike all the time; so it seemed like an excellent idea.

Mike explained the whole idea and Will started imagining how he could draw it. He was always inspired by how creative Mike was with words, the way he explained different things was beautiful and Will would do anything to just sit there all day and listen to Mike talk. It really relaxed him and took his mind off all of the stuff he was going through, and that was exactly what he needed.

Mike knew it was important to talk about things that were going on, but not for too long. He’d then start talking about different things to take Will’s mind off it, and it always seemed to help no matter what situation. Mike wasn’t like a cure for Will, he wasn’t the answer to all of his problems; he couldn’t possibly expect that from him. But Will still needed him. He always had, and what Will didn’t realise was

Mike needed him just as much too.

They balanced each other out in a way, they never felt truly themselves when they were without each other. Especially with Will at that moment, but it was the same when everything seemed more ordinary. They'd been a part of each other's lives for so long, so they never really felt complete when they weren't with each other.

In the midst of all of their talking, Will had ended up lying down with Mike next to him, and they were both just staring up at the ceiling. They were pretty close together since Will's bed wasn't that big but his mom managed to fit in it the night before so it was okay. Will's skin tingled where it touched Mike's side, he tried his best to ignore it. Like he always did.

"I want to stop all of this." Will broke their silence. They'd spent so long talking about other things so they didn't have to think about it, but Will felt like he should.

"Will, you don't-"

"I can't just avoid talking about it forever, things are going to get bad. Really bad, Mike." Will continued.

Mike sighed. "You know, you're probably right. There's no denying that. But we can fix this, okay? We did last time, and we can now."

Will shook his head. "There's an easier way to stop it all. No one else has to suffer, and I don't want anyone suffering because of me."

"Will, you better not be talking about what I think you're talking about because I swear, that is not an option, alright?" Mike was quick to protest to the idea he assumed Will had.

"Maybe it's for the best, though." Will tried to explain himself. "If there's no me... then there's no way for the shadow monster to be connected to our world."

"Will, you can't just do that."

"But what if I have to do that? Listen, Mike. If it comes to that, if... if me dying means I can save so many others then you *have* to let it

happen, okay?” Will sniffled after he managed to get his words out, Mike couldn’t believe he was even contemplating this.

“Will, you have to try. I’m not going to let you just give up.” Mike said, and he reached for Will’s hand. Their pinky fingers linked soon enough. “We can’t lose you again... I don’t want to lose you again. I can’t.”

Will let a tear escape. “I’m not giving up yet, I’m just saying if it comes to that then just promise me you’ll let me do the right thing?”

“I don’t think I can, Will. If that means losing you then I can’t promise I’ll be okay with that.” Mike was on the verge of crying now, and he realised how amazing his best friend was. He was telling him he was willing to die in order to save other people. Mike tried to keep his emotions to himself, because he was starting to get angry.

Why did it have to be Will? Why him? Why pick the most innocent person on the planet? Why not pick some criminal who deserved it? Why did it have to be my best friend? Why is it someone I care about? Why is it someone I love?

Someone I love.

“I’m sorry, Mike. I... I shouldn’t have said that. It was a stupid idea.” Will was quick to change his mind when he saw Mike getting upset, and if Mike was just this upset about him mentioning it then he didn’t even want to imagine what he’d be like if it actually happened. Then he thought about his mom, his brother... his friends. He’d have to keep trying.

Mike laughed slightly and then sniffled. “Damn right it is. Don’t ever talk about dying again okay? I’m not gonna suffer through your funeral, again.”

Will laughed a bit with Mike, and then he realised that Mike had fully grabbed his hand at some point. He didn’t even remember him doing it, but he wasn’t complaining. He’d never get tired of the gesture, and it made Mike feel better too.

It was like he was reassuring Will, so that explained why the next

morning Mike had to stop himself from grabbing onto Will's hand in the presence of Joyce and Bob, and instead he just touched Will's thumb with his own to remind him that he was still there.

Will then realised that Mike was right, he may have been willing to die himself but he couldn't do that to the people that cared about him. He felt bad enough the first time, and he didn't want to put everyone through that again. Not until he had to anyway, so he was going to do the right thing and try.

Mike and Will had found themselves in a comfortable silence after that, and Mike had managed to get closer if that was even possible. Will was still laying on his back, but now Mike was sort of propped up on his elbow, the side of his head resting on his palm; somewhat leaning over Will. They were sure they'd never been this close to each other before, still holding hands and everything. Will felt alive for the first time in a while.

"Mike?" Will said as quietly as he could, but it wasn't a whisper.

"Yeah?" Mike replied in the same quiet voice, and he sounded extremely tired. Will thought he ought to let Mike get some sleep, but Will was way too comfortable this way. Mike didn't look like he minded it either.

Will reached up to Mike and twirled a piece of his hair between his fingers, before letting his hand drop to his chest. He told himself he shouldn't do it, but he really wanted to. Mike was taken by surprise, but he liked it.

"You're really close to me." Will pointed out, he turned his head slightly to look at Mike's face. He could count ever freckle up this close.

Mike shifted slightly, and Will was sure he got closer. "Is it bothering you?"

"It should," Will said, and he knew Mike would move if he asked him. But that wasn't what he wanted. "But... it isn't."

"Good." Mike nodded, before closing his eyes for a few moments.

“Because I like this.”

“What is this, though?” Will wondered out loud. It was something he always wondered, and he thought that now wasn’t the best time to bring it up; but he hoped Mike would be too tired to remember their conversation in the morning.

“I don’t know, Will.” Mike opened his eyes again and looked at Will, squeezing his hand reassuringly. “I think it can be whatever you want it to be.”

Before Will had any time to freak out over that, he had a reason to freak out more. Mike shifted again and his head was suddenly against Will’s chest and his eyes were closed. Will had no idea what to say, but fortunately he eventually heard Mike’s soft snores and he realised he had fallen asleep pretty quickly.

Will had always imagined Mike cuddling him as he slept, and there he was. It was much better than he imagined, and he couldn’t quite believe it was happening. Soon enough Mike would wake up to find their legs tangled together, and Will fast asleep. He’d admire him up close for a few moments, before deciding that he’d have to detangle himself and make his way to the sleeping bag on the floor because he didn’t want Joyce finding them like that in the morning. Mike would never know she’d already checked on them whilst they were both asleep. Twice.

“One day, Mikey.” Will whispered, he knew Mike was asleep but he just had to be careful. He let himself play with his hair then, twirling pieces between his fingers. “One day it might be what I want it to be, and I hope you want the same.”

Will had the best sleep in so long that night, Mike managed to make things so much better; even if it was for a short time. Mike would stick with him throughout all of it, Will knew that. As much as he didn’t want to admit it, he knew Mike would even risk his life for him. He’d put himself in danger for him, and he’d always be there to make him feel okay; no matter what.

For the moment, though; they just enjoyed laying together. Enjoying whatever it was... and whatever they wanted it to be.